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Traveling Libraries: The Arabic Manuscripts of Muley Zidan and the Escorial Library

Daniel Hershenzon
University of Connecticut

Abstract

In 1612, a Spanish fleet captured a French ship whose stolen cargo included the entire manuscript collection of the Sultan of Morocco, Muley Zidan. Soon, the collection made its way to the royal library, El Escorial, transforming the library into an important repository of Arabic books, which, since then, Arabists from across Europe sought to visit. By focusing on the social life of the collection, from the moment of its capture up through the process of its incorporation into the Escorial, this article examines three related issues: the first regards the social trajectories of books and the elasticity of their meaning and function, which radically altered in nature. The second part of the article examines the circulation of the Moroccan manuscripts in relation to a complex economy of restrictions over the reading and possession of Arabic manuscripts in early modern Spain. Finally, the third part focuses on the political and legal debates that ensued the library's capture, when the collection became the locus of international negotiations between Spain, Morocco, France and the Dutch United Provinces over Maritime law, captives, and banned knowledge. By placing and analyzing the journey of Zidan's manuscripts within the context of Mediterranean history, the paper explains (1) why Spain established one of the largest collections of Arabic manuscripts exactly when it was cleansing its territories of Moriscos (Spanish forcibly converted Muslims), and (2) why the Moroccan collection was kept behind locked doors at the Escorial.

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Keywords

The early modern period – Spain – Morocco – the Mediterranean – manuscripts and libraries – Arabic

Introduction

Throughout the sixteenth century, and more intensively from mid-century, the Spanish crown, local authorities, and the Spanish Inquisition enacted policies to wipe out the Arabic language.[1] In 1564, the *Cortes* of Valencia forbade the Valencian Moriscos (forcibly converted Muslims) to speak or write in Arabic; in 1567, Philip II prohibited the use of spoken and written Arabic in Castile, and in response, the Inquisition began confiscating, storing and burning Arabic manuscripts. In 1593, the ecclesiastical authorities in Saragossa announced that New Christians—namely the Moriscos—who owned books in Arabic could hand them in and be pardoned.[2] This incomplete list of prohibitions on writing and speaking and confiscations and burning of manuscripts, paired with forced conversion and expulsion, formed part of a larger process to which historians now refer as the ethnic cleansing of Moriscos and Muslims in Spain.[3] Yet, parallel to this, Spanish scholars and diplomats were enthusiastically searching for and buying books and manuscripts in all languages, including Arabic, for the new royal library of San Lorenzo in the Escorial. Ironically, then, as Inquisitors and Crown were purging the public space of Arabic, scholars—

1 Bernard Vincent, *El río morisco* (Valencia, 2006), 105-106.

2 Ana Labarta, "Inventario de los documentos árabes contenidos en procesos inquisitoriales contra moriscos valencianos conservados en el Archivo Histórico Nacional de Madrid (Legajos 548-556)," *Al-Qantara* 1 (1980): 115; Mercedes García-Arenal, "The Religious Identity of the Arabic Language and the Affair of the Lead Books of the Sacromonte of Granada," *Arabica* 56 (2009): 507; Idem, "La Inquisición y los libros de los moriscos," in *Memoria de los moriscos. Escritos y relatos de una diáspora cultural*, ed. Alfredo Mateos Paramio, Juan Carlos Villaverde Amieva (Madrid, 2010), 57; Jacqueline Fournel-Guerin, "Le libre et la civilisation écrite dans la communauté morisque aragonaise (1540-1629)," *Mélanges de la Casa de Velázquez* 15 (1979): 241.

3 In the past decade, leading scholars on Morisco history who publish in Spanish began using the term "ethnic cleansing" (*limpieza étnica*) to describe this process, see Mercedes García Arenal and Gerard Wiegers, "Introducción," in *Los moriscos: Expulsión y diaspora*, ed. idem (Valencia, 2013), 11-24; Trevor J. Dadson, *Los moriscos de Villarrubia de los Ojos* (*Siglos XV-XVIII*) (Madrid, 2007); James S. Amelang, *Historias paralelas: Judeoconversos y moriscos en la España moderna* (Madrid, 2011).

some of whom worked with the Inquisition—and the king were collecting Arabic manuscripts into the well-organized space of the royal library. The contrast between eradication of a language, on the one hand, and collecting Arabic manuscripts, on the other, is even starker than it might first appear. Measures against the Moriscos culminated in their deportation from Spain between 1609 and 1614.[4] And yet, in the expulsion's last year, in 1614, Spain incorporated into its royal library, the Escorial, a huge collection of Arabic manuscripts stolen from the Moroccan Sultan, Muley Zidan, thus transforming the library into an important repository of Arabic books which, since then, Arabists from across Europe have sought to consult.

The Moroccan manuscript collection reached the Spanish royal library two years after a Spanish fleet captured a French ship whose stolen cargo included the Moroccan library. By following the social life of the collection, from the moment of its capture up until the later stages of its incorporation into the Escorial, I examine two related questions. The first regards the social trajectories of books and the elasticity of their meaning and function, which could radically alter in nature. The Moroccan manuscripts were transformed from worthless spoils, into repositories of knowledge to be studied, and doctrinally problematic texts to be stored or burned, and then into valuable political hostages in return for which the Moroccan Sultan was willing to pay. A group of individual texts or objects became an indivisible collection, and a Moroccan possession became a Spanish one. These shifts remind us that books are never merely transmitters or embodiments of knowledge. Books may often act as class and status markers never to be read, or may be consumed but not by reading, but even if they do end up as things arranged on library shelves that people read—as happened to Zidan's manuscripts—they first need to be transformed into classifiable, accessible, and readable objects.[5]

The point of the analysis, however, is not only to demonstrate that "things" sometimes have complicated social biographies but more specifically to

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4 Antonio Feros has argued that the decision to expulse the Moriscos in 1609, exactly when Philip III signed the "Twelve Years" truce with the Dutch rebels, was a royal attempt to recuperate the prestige the crown felt it had lost in signing the cease fire agreement, see Antonio Feros, *El Duque de Lerma, Realeza y Privanza en la España de Felipe III* (Madrid, 2002), 353-372.

5 José Adriano de Freitas Carvalho, "¿El club de los señores de las bibliotecas muertas? Nota a propósito de la librería del primer Marqués de Niza en el Portugal de mediados del siglo XVII," in *Libro y lectura en la península ibérica y América* (*siglos XIII-XVIII*), ed. Antonio Castillo Gómez (Salamanca, 2003), 165-188. Also, reading is not the only way to consume books. We can take pleasure in touching, tasting, seeing, and hearing them, see Fernando Bouza, *Hétérographies. Formes de l'écrit au siècle d'or espagnol* (Madrid, 2010), 3-34.

examine the circulation of the Moroccan manuscripts in relation to the wide, and yet limited, positions in seventeenth-century Spain vis-à-vis Arabic books and knowledge.[6] As reflected in the prohibitions listed above, in early modern Spain Arabic manuscripts were something inquisitors sought to eradicate. Like elsewhere in the Christian world, this hunt formed part of the institutionalization of censorship and control over books and reading, and texts in other languages were not exempt of a similar fate.[7] In Spain, however, restrictions on Arabic were also related to the presence of Moriscos, evangelization and failed assimilation, and the Moriscos' relation with Morocco and the Ottoman Empire.[8] The fact that the Moriscos were eventually expelled from Spain, and Arabic disappeared as a living language, has led scholars to believe that by the seventeenth century, oriental scholarship ceased to exist in Spain.[9] Recent work, however, forces us to qualify this image by exploring a small but enthusiastic group of scholars of Oriental languages, among them Moriscos and Middle-Eastern Christians who, despite the inquisitorial hunt, continued to covet and study Arabic manuscripts, mainly for the access they provided into bodies of knowledge in Semitic languages as well as these languages themselves.[10] This scholarship clearly demonstrates that Spanish oriental

6 On the social career of "things," see Igor Kopytoff, "The Cultural Biography of Things: Commoditization as Process," in *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, ed. Arjun Appadurai, (Cambridge and New York, 1986), 64-94.

7 For this argument within the context of Hebrew books and Hebraism in the sixteenth century, Amnon Raz-Karkotzkin, *The Censor, the Editor, and the Text: The Catholic Church and the Shaping of the Jewish Canon in the Sixteenth Century* (Philadelphia, 2007).

8 Andrew Hess, "The Moriscos: An Ottoman Fifth Column in Sixteenth-Century Spain," *American Historical Review* 74 (1968): 1-25 and Mercedes García-Arenal, "Los moriscos en Marruecos: de la emigración de los granadinos a los hornacheros de Salé," in *Los Moriscos: expulsión y diáspora, una perspectiva internacional*, ed. Idem and Gerard Wiegers, (Valencia, 2013), 275-312.

9 James T. Monroe, *Islam and the Arabs in Spanish Scholarship* (Leiden, 1970), 3 and G. J. Toomer, *Eastern Wisdome and Learning: The Study of Arabic in Seventeenth-Century England* (Oxford, 1996), 17.

10 Rodríguez Mediano, "Fragmentos de orientalismo Español del S. XVII," *Hispania, Revista española de historia* LXVI (2006): 243-276; Mediano and Mercedes García-Arenal, "Los libros de los moriscos y los eruditos orientales," *Al-Qantara* XXXI (2010): 611-646 and by the same authors, *The Orient in Spain: Converted Muslims, the Forged Lead Books of Granada, and the Rise of Orientalism* (Leiden, 2013). Gerard Wiegers, "Moriscos and Arabic Studies in Europe," *Al-Qantara* XXXI (2010): 587-610. A different criticism of the image of an all-powerful Inquisition that points out the failure of the Holy Office to execute the prohibitions not only on Arabic but on all sorts of texts, was recently launched by literary scholars, see Ryan Prendergast, *Reading, Writing, and Errant Subjects in Inquisitorial Spain*

studies persisted even as the Inquisition was destroying Arabic manuscripts. Ironically, however, despite obvious differences between them, early modern Spanish Arabists shared with inquisitors a disposition towards the Arabic language, and more specifically Arabic manuscripts. Both groups were equally interested in the knowledge—erroneous and dangerous for inquisitors or useful for scholars—contained in such manuscripts.

This affinity seems to reinforce the contrast between, on the one hand, restrictions on the use of Arabic and the expulsion of the Moriscos, and on the other, collecting Arabic manuscripts. It might be argued, then, that these processes are unrelated and thus their simultaneousness is neither surprising nor at odds. The first is a movement of separation—burning of books and expulsing of people—geared to minimize, indeed prevent, contact between Spain and its Moriscos as well as their culture, both perceived Muslim; The second a process of assimilation—capturing, cataloging, and storing Arabic manuscripts—which made something Muslim Spanish. Both cases seem to manifest different politics towards Arabic knowledge—destruction versus conservation. Finally and from a different perspective, in the case of the Moriscos, it is the treatment of human beings that stands out—despite the fact that manuscripts were part of this process—whereas in the case of the Moroccan collection, it is the treatment of material objects, manuscripts.

The article, however, argues that these phenomena were neither contrasted nor unrelated but rather formed variations of the same political process. Like the cleansing of the Moriscos and their culture, the incorporation of the Moroccan collection in the Escorial was an instance in which the Spanish crown asserted its exclusive power to manage things Muslim—the crown alone could simultaneously burn manuscripts and collect and own them. The contrast between the two cases, then, is contradictory only in so far as we perceive manuscripts exclusively as repositories of knowledge. The juxtaposition of debates about the importance and danger embodied in the Moroccan collection to legal and political negotiations among Spain, Morocco, France, and Dutch Republic over the future of the Sultan's manuscripts will demonstrate how early modern polities developed, enacted, and lived in peace with what now seem heterogeneous and often opposed agendas. In other words, these processes were over-determined and the objects at their center cannot be reduced to merely questions of knowledge. In this sense, analyzing the history of the Moroccan manuscripts from a political perspective not only sheds new

(Burlington, 2011) and Patricia W. Manning, *Voicing Dissent in Seventeenth-Century Spain: Inquisition, Social Criticism and Theology in the Case of El Criticón* (Leiden, 2009).

light on the Escorial library, its Arabic collection, and scholarly debates over Arabic at the time, but also broadens our understanding of the expulsion of the Moriscos and the destruction of their culture, allowing their framing as part of power monopolization and claiming of sovereignty.[11]

Toward this end, I begin by reconstructing this fantastic story of theft on the high seas and then follow the spatial trajectory of the books—from Morocco to Lisbon, Cadiz, Madrid, and finally the Escorial—and the corresponding shifts in their meaning and potential uses. The first to examine the manuscripts in Spain were the fleet officers, who prepared an inventory of the Moroccan goods and evaluated their worth. Next, the manuscripts were handed to a court interpreter of Arabic and then sent to the Escorial Library. That the manuscripts found their way to the Escorial does not imply that their meaning was fixed or residency there assured. Indeed, as scholars and librarians were examining the collection and planning its transfer to the Escorial, the manuscripts' near future remained in doubt as is reflected in the debates among the State Counselors regarding the proper use of the manuscripts.[12] The reconstruction of the history of the Moroccan library, I argue, suggests that even in seventeenth-century Spain—the Golden Age but also the age of the Inquisition—epistemology alone did not determine exclusively the fate of Arabic texts; law and politics were as, if not more, important. It is only by linking the political history of the Mediterranean and the relations between Morocco, Spain, and other European powers with that of erudition and oriental scholarship that we can understand the history of this manuscript collection and the complexity of attitudes towards Arabic in early modern Spain.

11 This does not exclude but rather builds upon Feros' explanation of the expulsion (see footnote 6) or the expulsion's framing as part of Spain's homogenization into Catholicism. For an example of how debates over the Moriscos, Arab culture, and Islam mediated struggles over power between the crown, the nobility, and the church, see the discussion of the Moriscos of Aragon in Luis F. Bernabé Pons, *Los Moriscos, conflicto, expulsión y diáspora* (Madrid, 2009), 46-48.

12 This article follows the transformation of manuscripts and negotiations over them between 1612 and 1615. For later attempts of Moroccan Sultans to retrieve the manuscripts, see Ahmed-Chouqui, *Histoire des bibliothèques au Maroc* (Rabat, 1992), 150-154. For the 1671 fire that consumed around half of the collection, see Gregorio de Andrés, *La real biblioteca de el Escorial* (Madrid, 1970), 39-40. For an eye witness testimony, see Gregorio de Andrés, "Relación historial del incendio y reconstrucción del monasterio de el Escorial (1671-1677), por el padre Juan de Toledo," *Hispania sacra* 29 (1976): 77-178.

On the High Seas

On June 22, 1612, a French consul-turned-pirate, Jehan Philippe de Castelane, stole the library of the Moroccan Sultan, Muley Zidan. Having been defeated a month earlier at Marrakesh by a local Sufi leader, Zidan decided to head south to Agadir and reorganize his forces.[13] He had commissioned Castelane, a French merchant sent to Morocco by Louis XIII to ransom French captives, to transport his boxed household goods from Safi to Agadir in return for which Castelane was to be paid 3000 escudos. Castelane arrived in Agadir on June 16, but six days later when he realized that the Moroccans were not quick to pay, and perhaps never intended paying him, he raised anchor and headed north, intending to reach Marseille where he would sell the goods to the governor of Provence. On July 5, near Mehdya (also known as la Mamora or San Miguel de Ultramar) Castelane's ship was intercepted by four Spanish galleys of the fleet of Luis Fajardo, admiral of the Armada of the Ocean Sea. The Spaniards arrested Castelane and his crew, and took them to Lisbon, then part of the Spanish Empire.[14] The French were sentenced at the Council of War, the highest military legal jurisdiction of the Empire, and declared pirates, a decision that made seizing the goods they had carried a lawful prize (*de buena presa*).[15] Later I return to the question of the relations between Spain and France at the

13 Mohammed Ibn Azuz, "La Biblioteca de Muley Zaidan en el Escorial," *Cuadernos de la biblioteca Española de Tetuán* 17-18 (1978): 117-153, esp. 124-127.

14 Zidan's library was not the only manuscript collection to be captured on the high seas and in a way its story is trivial. Robbery and war were and still are ways to gain possession over books and establish new libraries. In the same decade, a Jewish library holding five hundred manuscripts was captured by pirates and taken to Malta from where it was eventually ransomed, see Menachem Weinstein, *Kehilat Algir vahachamea bame'ot ha-16 ve ha-17* Bar Ilan, Yearbook, 14-15 (1977): 18-20. In 1648, the English ship that carried the library of the Marquis of Niza, holding around one thousand six hundred volumes, to Lisbon was captured by the Spaniards, see Freitas Carvalho, "¿El club de los señores de las bibliotecas muertas?" 168. For an overview of thefts of Arabic manuscripts in the early modern period, see Robert Jones, "Piracy, Wars, and the Acquisition of Arabic Manuscripts in Renaissance Europe," *Manuscripts of the Middle East* 2 (1987): 96-109 and Andrew Pettegree, *The Book in the Renaissance* (New Haven and London, 2010), 328-330. For a recent case, see Gish Amit, "Ownerless Objects: The Story of the Books Palestinians Left Behind in 1948," *Jerusalem Quarterly* 22 (2008): 7-20.

15 For a detailed reconstruction, see Henry de Castries, "Autour d'une bibliothèque marocaine," *Journal des Débats* (20.10.1907): 3. For the ways in which the affair was remembered in the later seventeenth century, see Braulio Justel Calabozo, *La Real Biblioteca de El Escorial y sus manuscritos árabes: sinopsis histórico-descriptiva* (Madrid, 1978), 171-177.

time, but for now, we leave Castelane and his crew detained at Lisbon and follow his ship's cargo, which was taken to Cadiz.

Inventorying the Household Goods

In Cadiz, Luis Fajardo began evaluating the cargo and preparing an inventory of the household goods. That Fajardo was responsible for the capture and in charge of its first inventory, demonstrates how the relation between the formation of an important collection of Arabic manuscripts, on the one hand, and the eradication of Arabic and the ethnic cleansing of Moriscos in Spain, on the other, was more than merely one of simultaneity. These processes were not only synchronized; the same agents executed both of them. Fajardo is the paradigmatic example. In his capacity as the admiral of the Armada of the Ocean Sea he was responsible for the capture of the goods. However, in the same period he was also in charge of the expulsion of the Moriscos of Valencia and Murcia and their transfer to North Africa.[16] The links between politics and erudite culture embedded in figures such as Fajardo stress the need to better incorporate Mediterranean political history to that of oriental scholarship and language policies in early modern Spain. In any case, on July 31, Fajardo completed an inventory of the 120 boxes that belonged to Zidan. This inventory, which fortunately for the historian survived in the bundles of paper of the Council of War, is a careful and detailed account of everything found in the boxes: from articles of clothing (socks, shirts, etc.) and different kinds of cloth (taffeta, velvet, silk, etc.), through expensive large mirrors and astrolabes, pearls and grey amber, to books, thousands of books. Fajardo indicates that 73 out of the 120 boxes he found contained books but he does not provide the exact number of books found. Later accounts report that the library held between 3970 and 3980 manuscripts. In contemporary terms, it probably equals the library of a large research university, i.e. a collection of millions of books. What Fajardo saw in front of him, however, were piles of material objects. For him, there was no difference between the books, astrolabes, and the precious clothes, and thus he did not indicate the books' titles or make any reference to their contents. And yet, his inventory is extremely detailed. Listen to his description of the contents of one of the first boxes he opened: "Seven bound books in the Arabic language some of which with silk covers. Another book is bound in golden calf skin with golden illuminations [adorning] the

16 Henry Lapeyre, *Geografía de la España morisca* (Valencia, 1986), 63-68, 158-170, and 204-208.

Arabic letters. [It is] wrapped in mother of pearl taffeta and over it [there is] another crimson taffeta embroidered with shaded flowers and gold."[17]

Some books in this inventory received individual and detailed description while others were lumped into small groups. Even the ones that won an individual description were for Fajardo no more than material objects and never repositories of knowledge. Their description is not based on the thought their authors invested in their writing but rather on the materials that formed them and the artisanal labour invested in them. If an admiral provided such a detailed account, imagine how dense would be the description given by a book binder, a book illuminator, or an erudite scholar.

At the same time, the thoroughness of Fajardo's description and the precision in regard to materials—silk, gold, crimson, etc.—might be misleading, creating the impression that Fajardo believed he had found a treasure. Far from that, as his letters demonstrate, he was extremely disappointed with the findings. He was convinced that the truly valuable contents, which he believed were jewels, gold, and pearls had been stolen, either by the French sailors or by the Spaniards who took over Castelane's ship. His expectations were not unreal as in the same year, Spain held in Tangiers the inheritance of Muley al-Shayj, Zidan's brother, and according to rumors that circulated in North Africa and in Spain, al-Shayj had more than a million and a half ducats in cash and another half a million in precious stones.[18] It is in this light that we ought to interpret Fajado's frustration and his decision to investigate the French sailors who were tortured in an attempt to retrieve information about the gold and precious stones.[19] The results were ambiguous and did not provide Fajardo with what he hoped to find. In a letter sent to Philip III on August 5, for example, he noted that "if there was anything of value, the Spanish [sailors] stole it."[20] A week later, still disillusioned by the contents of the household boxes, he wrote that the captured goods were "of a very different substance to that which they [initially] promised."[21] At this point, then, the manuscripts were at the nadir of their career. Not only was their identity based exclusively on their materiality but also as material objects they were perceived of very little value.

Fajardo never comments on the fact that the manuscripts were Arabic; it would have been interesting to know how (or if) that influenced his evaluation

17 AGS, *Guerra Antigua*, Leg. 776, 31.7.1612.

18 Tomas García Figueras and Carlos Rodríguez Joulia Saint-Cyr, *Larache: Datos para su historia en el siglo XVII* (Madrid, 1973), 125-127.

19 AGS, *Guerra Antigua*, Leg. 776, 1.8.1612.

20 AGS, *Guerra Antigua*, Leg. 776, 5.8.1612.

21 AGS, *Guerra Antigua*, Leg. 776, 12.8.1612.

of them as disappointing. Being involved in the expulsion of the Moriscos, he must have known how Arabic books were proscribed and confiscated at the time. On the other hand, as the second son of the second Marquis of Los Vélez—captain-general of the Kingdom of Granada—he must have been aware of the Lead Books frenzy that swept across and beyond the city of Granada at the turn of the seventeenth century, the search for experts on Arabic it created, and *ipso facto* the interest in Arabic manuscripts it revived.[22] Whatever the reason—and simple lack of knowledge of the language must have played a major role—at this stage, the manuscripts remained as material things, and as such were of little value.

Dangerous Books, Useful Knowledge

Soon, however, the books began the process of regaining an individual identity based on their contents. Sometime between August and November 1612, on the order of Philip III, the library was transferred to Madrid and stored in the home of Juan de Idiáquez, perhaps the most influential member of the Council of State, while the remaining household goods were taken to Lisbon. It must have whetted the curiosity of the court scholars and some rushed to take a look at the unique spoils.[23] Francisco Gurmendi, Idiáquez' nephew and a royal interpreter of Arabic, Turkish, and Persian, was commissioned to evaluate the books and identify their themes.[24] More than a year later, in 1613, Gurmendi reported his findings; the library, he wrote, held

22 On the Lead Books affairs, see M. Barrios Aguilera and M. García-Arenal, eds., *Los Plomos del Sacromonte. Invención y tesoro* (Valencia, 2006); A.K. Harris, *From Muslim to Christian Granada: Inventing a City's Past in Early Modern Spain* (Baltimore, 2007) and David Coleman, *Creating Christian Granada: Society and Religious Culture in an Old-World Frontier City, 1492-1600* (Ithaca, New York, 2003), 188-202.

23 The Royal Chronicler, Gil Gonzales Dávila, when reporting the capture in his *Historia de la vida y hechos del ínclito Monarca, amado y santo, D. Felipe Tercero*, informed his readers that he saw the manuscripts with his own eyes at Idiáquez', see Gil Gonzales Dávila, *Historia de la vida y hechos del ínclito Monarca, amado y santo, D. Felipe Tercero*, Vol. III (Madrid, 1771), 161.

24 Grace Magnier claims that Gurmendi was nominated royal translator only in 1615 with the death of the previous incumbent, the Morisco Alonso del Castillo, see Grace Magnier, "Pedro de Valencia, Francisco de Gurmendi and the Plomos de Granada," *Al-Qantara* XXIV (2003): 412. However, in 1614 Gurmendi already served as a court interpreter of Oriental languages as is reflected by a writ (*cedula*) from that year in which the king refers to Gurmendi as "my servant who serves me in the translation and interpretation of the

> Four thousand books, less twenty or thirty, the majority untitled and more than five hundred of them unbound. Thus, in order to divide and arrange them according to their sciences and subjects, he has spent much time, and has found that two thousand volumes (*cuerpos de libros*) and more are commentaries of the Koran and other erroneous [books], a thousand of diverse topics of the humanities, and the rest of philosophy, of mathematics, and some of medicine.[25]

The extant documents do not indicate what instructions Gurmendi had received and whether or not he was explicitly asked to identify and separate the Korans and religious texts from the other books. Gurmendi was definitely not the first to make that distinction. More than a century before the capture of the Moroccan collection, in 1501 in Granada, Francisco Jimenez de Cisneros ordered the confiscation and burning of all the Korans found in the city but sent Arabic medical treatises to the University of Alcalá de Henares, established by him two years earlier.[26] Whether there was such an order or this was the norm when treating books in Arabic in early modern Spain, later documents approach the manuscripts in a similar way often even simplifying the division and treating the collection as if formed by two large groups—Korans, and the rest. Gurmendi added that the books "have no house where they can be" and recommended shipping them to the Royal Library of San Lorenzo, the Escorial.[27] Finally, he asked permission, which he received, to choose a few books and to take several dictionaries for his studies and in order to translate other volumes into Spanish.

In the same year or early in 1614, the prior of the Escorial, Juan de Peralta, who heard of Gurmendi's report, made a similar suggestion. Making a reference to the same principle according to which Gurmendi had divided the books, Peralta argued that the prohibited books (*libros vedados*), namely the Korans and commentaries of the Koran, ought to be deposited at the royal library in the monastery. It is worth examining his recommendation in light of a complex economy of prohibitions over the use of Arabic in particular and the

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Arabic, Turkish and Persian languages," see Philip III to Juan Peralta, 6.5.1614, transcribed and published at José Quevedo, *Historia del real monasterio de San Lorenzo llamado comúnmente del Escorial* (Madrid, 1854), 105-106.

25 AGS, *Estado*, Leg. 2644, 1613 printed in Pérez Pastor, *Bibliografía Madrileña II, 1601-1620* (Madrid, 1906), 333-334.

26 Juan de Vallejo, *Memorial de la vida de fray Francisco Jiménez de Cisneros* (Madrid, 1913), 35.

27 AGS, *Estado*, Leg. 2644, 1613.

reading of works in other languages in general in early modern Spain. I opened the article by listing some of the restrictions on the use of Arabic imposed on the Spanish Moriscos. Forced to convert in the first quarter of the sixteenth century, the Moriscos kept many of their cultural traditions and practices and were perceived inassimilable despite their conversion. The restrictions on Arabic were meant to uproot their apparent persistent belief in Islam and complete their conversion to Christianity. In tandem, however, other restrictions on the reading of works in Arabic as well as in Hebrew, Latin, and Romance and other languages were imposed on all Spanish subjects and institutions. In 1559, for example, the Index of Valdés declared that books "of the Mahomaten sect written in Arabic, or in Romance, or in any vernacular language" were prohibited.[28] Despite the resemblance between restrictions on Arabic directed at the Moriscos and those directed at Old Christians it is important to distinguish between them as they applied to different subjects and were set to achieve different goals. It is the indices, originally devised as a response to the Protestant Reformation, that are relevant in the case of Zidan's manuscripts and the Escorial. The exchange that developed around the library and its fate and Gurmendi and Peralta's division of the books in two groups complicates linguistic restrictions set by the indices. That Peralta made the point that the king had ordered that prohibited books be deposited in the Escorial hints at how prohibitions were implemented unequally and the royal library enjoyed concessions formally inexistent.

Peralta, however, went further and asked that the rest of the books also be sent to the royal library and incorporated into its collections, because this way the royal library "will be granted a great favor."[29] That the prior of the Escorial sought to enrich the library's collections with Arabic manuscripts is not surprising. Despite of the growing association between Arabic and Islam, since the establishment (1563-84) of the Escorial, the living spirits behind in its first years were constantly on the hunt for manuscripts and books in all languages.[30] In a report regarding the purchase of books in Rome, Benito Arias Montano, a renowned Hebraist and the head librarian of the Escorial until 1584,

28 Antonio Sierra Corella, *La censura en España. Índices y catálogos de libros prohibidos* (Madrid, 1947), 232.

29 AGS, *Estado*, Leg. 2644.

30 On the early history of the Escorial, see Guillermo Antolín y Pajares, *La Real Biblioteca de El Escorial. Discursos leídos ante la Real Academia de la Historia* (Escorial, 1921). For the various programs for a royal library designed by sixteenth-century scholars, see Françios Géal, *Figures de la bibliothèque dans l'imaginaire espagnol du Siècle d'Or* (Paris, 1999), 81-136. On the association of Arabic with Islam, see García-Arenal, "The Religious Identity of the Arabic Language and the Affair of the Lead Books of the Sacromonte of Granada."

described what kind of Arabic manuscripts the royal library held and what kind had to be purchased:[31] "The library contains a good number of Arabic books but almost half concern medicine and astrology with a smaller number concerning mathematics; nonetheless there are not enough sacred texts and volumes of religious doctrine, and poetry and history of which this language was rich and full of elegance; equally absent are [books on] philosophy."[32]

Arias Montano, then, was interested in texts of all kind, including Korans, and indeed in these years, the Arabic collection grew through the consistent purchase of single books and whole libraries. In 1570, for example, when the royal chronicler Juan Páez de Castro died, 320 manuscripts from his library, out of which sixty-six were Arabic manuscripts, were sent to the Escorial. In the following years, dozens, perhaps hundreds, of additional Arabic manuscripts made their way in similar circumstances to the Escorial.[33] Buying manuscripts and devouring libraries were not the only methods of finding Arabic manuscripts. We saw that Peralta made a reference to a royal order according to which all prohibited books should be deposited in the Escorial. Had the Inquisition followed the order, it would have sent thousands of manuscripts to

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31 Arias Montano was another figure that encapsulated the tension between prohibition of Arabic manuscripts, on the one hand, and buying, collecting, and studying manuscripts, on the other. As he was sending agents to buy books in the important European print centers, he participated in making various indices of prohibited books for the inquisition, see Concha Varela Orol and Martín González Fernández, *Heterodoxos e malditos. Lecturas prohibidas na Universidade de Santiago* (Santiago de Compostela, 2002), 322-323. In fact, in a later opinion from 1585 archived at the section of the Inquisition at the National Historical Archive, Arias Montano acknowledged the existence of forbidden books at the Escorial but explained why it was important to keep some of them at the library, see "Memorial de los libros vedados que se hallan en la librería de S. Lorenzo el Real," in B. Rekers, *Benito Arias Montano, (1527-1598)* (Leiden, 1972), 162. More on Arias Montano and the Arabic manuscripts of the Escorial, see Braulio Justel Calabozo, "Arias Montano y los manuscritos árabes de El Escorial," *Anales de la Universidad de Cádiz* 7-8, no. 2 (1990-1): 303-310.

32 "Lo que escribe Arias Montano sobre los libros que se podrían traer para San Lorenzo, de Roma," in Rekers, *Benito Arias Montano*, 158.

33 In 1575, when Diego de Hurtado de Mendoza died, his library, with a few Arabic manuscripts, was also incorporated into the royal library. Similarly, the library of Arias Montano himself, which contained twenty-eight Arabic manuscripts, became part of the royal collection in 1599. These are only the major acquisitions and doubtless other manuscripts made their way into the royal library in smaller numbers. On these and other acquisitions of Arabic manuscripts, see Antolín y Pajares, *La Real Biblioteca de El Escorial*, 36 and 48 and Nemesio Morata, "Un catálogo de los fondos árabes primitivos de El Escorial," *Al-Andalus* 2 (1934): 87-94.

the royal library. However, it did not send the manuscripts it confiscated, and often burnt them or stored them in inquisitorial prisons where they were doomed to decay.[34] Perhaps for this reason, in the formative years of the Escorial, there were several attempts to acquire Morisco manuscripts previously confiscated by the inquisitorial tribunal of Granada. There were also attempts to see if there were relevant Arabic manuscripts at the Cathedral of Cordova.[35] The results of this manuscript hunt are reflected in the various catalogues of the Arab collection prepared before the transfer of the Moroccan manuscripts to the Escorial and especially in the catalogue that Diego de Urrea prepared in 1597, which lists 449 titles.[36]

Erudite scholars and Arabists engaged in the search for manuscripts justified the collection and possession of Arabic manuscripts by stressing the utility of the Arabic language, a familiar trope employed across Europe at the time. In his oration "On the Value of the Arabic Language," Thomas Erpenius, the famous scholar of Oriental languages from Leiden, listed four reasons for the wide study of Arabic. He explained that knowledge of Arabic was key for the study of law, mathematics, medicine, geography, and poetry; it was crucial for the study of Hebrew but also Aramaic, Syriac, Rabbinical Hebrew, Ethiopic, and even Turkish and Persian; knowledge of the language facilitated commerce with the East; and finally, it was a tool for conversion.[37] Praising the study of Arabic in Spain posed particular difficulties as the language and its users were part of Spanish life until the expulsion of the Moriscos in 1614.

34 Labarta, "Inventario de los documentos árabes," 124-125. Some of these books, however, made their way into the libraries of Arabists who worked with the Inquisition or who were involved in the affair of the Lead Books (Libros de Plomo), see García-Arenal and Rodríguez Mediano, "Los libros de los moriscos y los eruditos orientales," 615-625.

35 Morata, "Un catálogo de los fondos árabes primitivos de El Escorial," 91-93.

36 The Catalogue is published in ibid. Morato Aga or Diego Urrea was an Italian taken captive by Muslim corsairs in his youth. He studied in the madrasah of Tlemcen in Northwestern Algeria and became an Ottoman secretary working in Algiers, Tripoli, Tunis, and Istanbul. In 1589, Morato Aga was captured by Christians, reconverted to Christianity and adopted the name of Diego de Urrea. He became a professor of Arabic at the University of Alcalá and was involved in the translation of Los Plomos. Urrea moved to Naples around the time that the Duke of Lemos was nominated its viceroy, see Fernando Rodríguez Mediano, "Diego de Urrea en Italia," *Al-Qantara* XXV (2004), 183-201 and idem, "Fragmentos de orientalismo español del siglo XVII."

37 Thomas Erpenius, "On the Value of the Arabic Language," in Robert Jones, "Thomas Erpenius (1584-1624) on the Value of the Arabic Langue," *Manuscripts of the Middle East* I (1986): 15-25. For the two last reasons and for a discussion of this part of Erpenius' oration, see Peter T. Van Rooden, *Theology, Biblical Scholarship and Rabbinical Studies in the Seventeenth Century* (Leiden, 1989), 59-60.

Spanish scholars of Oriental languages, and others, however, employed the same trope.[38] Arias Montano, for example, who participated in the preparation of more than one Index, argued that Arabic enabled access to a large body of scholarly work and added that Arabic would also facilitate communication with Middle Eastern Christians.[39] Similarly, Gurmendi justified his request to keep a few of Zidan's manuscripts by arguing that it would enhance his studies.[40] The trope of utility, then, was employed to justify the presence of a collection of Arabic manuscripts in inquisitorial Spain and the mere fact of the incorporation of Arabic manuscripts into the royal library is not surprising. Indeed, the manuscripts of Zidan seem to answer the needs of the Escorial to perfection, as expressed in Arias Montano's words quoted above.

The utility trope alone, however, was not enough to allow for the collection and ownership of Arabic manuscripts in early modern Spain. That required a special permit from the Inquisition. Such permits, at least in regard to non-Arabic books the indices prohibited, were not uncommon.[41] Arias Montano's unique links to the Inquisition and the fact he authored the 1570-1571 Index facilitated the issue of just such a permit, and an exemption from the obligation to destroy such books including Arabic manuscripts. This license was both limited in time and required renewal. Thus, in 1612 the head librarian, Lucas Alaejos, carried out long negotiations with the Inquisition about the extension of the license. The negotiations, which reflected the problematic status of the library in the eyes of the Inquisitors, were successful and the license, given certain limitations, was conceded. The library at the Escorial continued to enjoy this privilege granted by the Inquisition until 1641, when the permit to collect and read forbidden books was again limited.[42] The rather exceptional aspect of our particular case, then, was Peralta's insistence on separating the Korans from the rest of the books, imposing a classificatory logic from which the rest of the library's collection was exempt.

On the basis of the reports of Gurmendi and Peralta, Juan de Idiáquez submitted his recommendations on the matter to the king on March 6, 1614.[43] The king accepted them and two months later issued a royal writ ordering the

38 Rodríguez Mediano, "Fragmentos de orientalismo Español del S. XVII," 245-246.

39 Rekers, *Benito Arias Montano*, 158.

40 García-Arenal and Rodríguez Mediano, "Los libros de los moriscos y los eruditos orientales," 637-8.

41 Manning, *Voicing Dissent in Seventeenth-Century Spain*, 73-108.

42 Géal, *Figures de la bibliothèque dans l'imaginaire espagnol du Siècle d'Or*, 265-266 and Henry Charles Lea, *A History of the Inquisition of Spain*, Vol. III (New York, 1922), 499-500.

43 AGS, *Estado*, Leg. 2644, 6.3.1614. The document was published in *Revista de archivos, bibliotecas y museos*, 7 (1877): 220b-221b.

transfer of the books to the Escorial.[44] The king reiterated Peralta's reference to an order according to which prohibited books should be stored at the Escorial, and acceded to the prior's request that the rest of the books also be transferred to the royal library. Philip III, like Gurmendi, the prior, and Idiáquez treated the books as two distinct blocks. In so doing, they participated in the transformation of the manuscripts from objects made of precious material, but overall worthless, into repositories of knowledge, at once useful and dangerous. This classificatory logic, however, was not the only one in play. While ordering the shipping and storage of all the books in the Escorial, as Peralta wished, the king refused Peralta's request that the "permitted" books be incorporated into the rest of the collection. The royal writ specified that "[Zidan's] books, prohibited as well as not prohibited, ought to be separated from the other books, until I order what is to be done with them."[45] In other words, on top of the division of the books into two classes (Korans and the rest), a division deemed necessary by all parties, and despite their transfer to the Escorial, Zidan's books were stored separately from the rest of the king's books. The attempts of both Peralta and Gurmendi to shape the merging of the manuscripts into the royal library failed. None of the Sultan's books were to become part of the royal collection. They were to be stored at the monastery only temporarily, as a deposit, until their future would be determined. That separation was so important that it was the king himself who decided what ought to be done, in order to avoid potential confusion between Spanish and Moroccan books—"so that in no way, would [Zidan's] books be mixed with the other books," the Sultan's collection should be stored in a separate space, "the most elevated [hall] of this house [the Escorial]."[46]

Three classificatory systems were in play in the Escorial. The first allowed the lumping together of all books—including prohibited ones—and was based on a system of de-facto permanent exception, namely, on time-limited inquisitorial permits which, however, were continuously renewed over decades. The second pretended to implement inquisitorial prohibition in the library space, namely to store prohibited books in the Escorial, but isolated from the rest of the collections. Finally, the third distinguished between the Moroccan collection as a whole and the Spanish collections. The last two classifications were implemented in relation to the collection of Zidan.

44 Philip III to Juan Peralta, 6.5.1614, in José Quevedo, *Historia del real monasterio de San Lorenzo*, 105-106.

45 Ibid.

46 Ibid.

Manuscripts as Objects of Exchange

In order to better grasp what stood behind the division between Moroccan and Spanish books embodied in the king's writ, and to follow the continuous transformation of the manuscripts, we need to move on and examine the discussions about the books that took place, on the one side, between Zidan and his agents, the French King, and the States-General of the Dutch United Provinces, and on the other, among the members of the Spanish Council of State. The bulk of the records concerning the first set of negotiations are published. Thus, the following analysis, based mostly on hitherto unpublished archival documents, focuses mainly on debates among the Spanish state counselors.[47] For the counselors, like for Fajardo, the books were still an object of exchange, only this time, an indistinct one. Whereas Fajardo distinguished between single and small groups of manuscripts, Gurmendi went over the collection book by book, and together with Peralta perceived the books as formed by two groups, instead the counselors considered that the library formed an indivisible unit. The solidification of the manuscripts into an indivisible collection was tied to a change in the books' perceived value and their meaning. For the counselors, they were still useful but differently from how Arias Montano or Gurmendi thought of them. Now they were useful because they could be exchanged, thanks to their high value for the Sultan.

Two consultations recording these discussions survived. The first was issued on October 17, 1614 in response to the king's request. The king sought the counselors' opinion after having received another consultation from the Council of Portugal and a note from the Royal Confessor, Fray Luis de Aliaga. According to the members of the Council of Portugal (Portugal formed part of the Spanish Empire from 1580 to 1640), Zidan put a halt to the redemptive labor of the Trinitarians posted in Morocco, refusing to allow them to ransom any Christian captive before his library was returned. Namely, Zidan effectively turned the Spanish captives he held into hostages and linked their freedom to the retrieval of his library. The members of the Council of Portugal recommended giving the library to the Trinitarians, in order that the friars could negotiate its return to Zidan. In so doing, however, they went a step further than Zidan's move. Whereas Zidan conditioned the continuation of the redemptive labor of the Trinitarians in return for the library, the state counselors were interested in

47 For published collections of relevant documents, see Henry de Castries, ed., *Les sources inédites de l'histoire du Maroc, Première série—Dynastie Saadiene, Archive et Bibliothèques de France*, Vol. II (Paris, 1909) and Idem *Les sources inédites de l'histoire du Maroc, Première série—Dynastie Saadiene, Archive et Bibliothèques de Pays-Bas*, Vol. II (Paris, 1907).

swapping the library in exchange for freeing a large number of Christian captives. In other words, they were not seeking to return to the modus operandi that governed ransom before Zidan's ultimatum. Instead, the counselors suggested employing the library as equivalent to a large sum of money that could buy the freedom of numerous captives.

The Royal Confessor Aliaga supported that position, saying that the Spaniards "need not feel any scruples about returning the library."[48] His opinion is interesting in this regard: A Dominican and a member of the Councils of State and Inquisition, Aliaga made a leading candidate for the position of the Inquisitor General (indeed he came to occupy that position in 1619). That he found no obstacle in returning the books, and did not think they should be burned or stored, could have assuaged doubts that other counselors might have entertained regarding doctrinal problems resulting from keeping the library. What was the response of the State Counselors? Unfortunately, the document does not list the votes (*votos*) of each counselor but instead condenses them into one majority opinion. The Council supported the return of the library to Zidan should that facilitate the ransom of captives—"Conscience" explained the counselors, "does not oblige us to return the [books], nor command us to hold onto them."[49] However, the counselors insisted that the books were to be given back only once Zidan had made a direct offer—i.e. not through Portuguese mediation. Leaving the affair in the hands of the Council of Portugal would have entailed that Portugal, and not Castile, had possession over the library, and that the counselors unanimously objected. In this regard, it was internal politics—the power relations between different organs of the empire—that were at stake. In addition, the Council members recommended translating a few of the more useful books, making use of the same scholarly trope Arias Montano and others employed when discussing Arabic manuscripts and knowledge. However, perhaps because they assumed that Zidan was not going to ask for the collection immediately, they indicated that the translation of the manuscripts could begin once Zidan's claimed them.

A consultation from December 1615, i.e. a while after the books were shipped to the Escorial, details the individual votes of the counselors. Among the six counselors, the Cardinal of Toledo (the Inquisitor General at the time) alone made reference to an inner division between Korans and other books. The Cardinal, together with the Marquis of La Laguna, were the only counselors who argued that a few of the books ought to be copied or translated. The members were mostly occupied with the legality of the capture and what Spain

48 AGS, *Consejo de Estado*, Leg. 436, Lerma to the Council of State, 17.10.1614.

49 Ibid.

could get in return for the books. The Cardinal of Toledo and the Marquis of Velada, the first among the counselors to speak, expressed the problem in stark terms—"either there is or there is not an obligation to return the library."[50] The obligation referred to was not social but, rather, legal. As mentioned, Castelane, the Frenchman who stole the books and was then captured by the Spaniards, was declared a pirate by the Council of War, the highest military jurisdiction of the empire, a sentence which meant that seizing the goods he carried was legal, namely that the goods were a lawful prize. It seems, however, that a few counselors either doubted the ruling or were not well informed on the matter. Whereas the Marquis of La Laguna, the Duke of Infantado and Don Agustin Mexia were convinced beyond doubt that the king had no obligation to return the library, the rest insisted on verifying whether the library was indeed a lawful prize.[51] While the counselors disagreed about whether the capture was legal or not, they agreed that legality and not the books' contents or "confessional identity" was the criterion that should determine the future of the library.

The second point about which several members expressed interest was the potential return Spain should get in exchange for the library. The Marquis of La Laguna explained that the library was of great value and thus Spain should claim "a major thing or a *garrison town*" (emphasis added) in return for it.[52] This seemingly astounding expectation was not completely out of place. Its background was Spain's insistent attempts to conquer the port towns of El Araich (Larache) and Mehdya in Atlantic Morocco, both of which were eventually occupied in 1610 and 1614 respectively.[53] Indeed, the Marquis of La Laguna was seconding the Duke of Infantado but the Royal Confessor, Aliaga, believed that the proper use of the library would be its exchange in return for the liberation of the entire population of Christians—by which he meant Catholics—held captive in Morocco. Despite this difference of opinion, the counselors unanimously agreed that the return on the library ought to be hefty. One alternative, which the counselors did not mention, was to sell the

50 AGS, *Estado*, Leg. 495, 12.1615.

51 Mexia, who started his career as a *maestre de campo* in the army of Flanders, was also a major figure in the expulsion operation. He was in charge of the ground forces throughout the expulsion, see Luis F. Bernabé Pons, *Los Moriscos. Conflicto, Expulsión y Diáspora* (Madrid, 2009), 127.

52 AGS, *Estado*, Leg. 495, 12.1615.

53 On Spanish attempts to conquer these ports, especially Al Araich, see García Figueras and Joulia Saint-Cyr, *Larache* and Mercedes García-Arenal, Fernando Rodríguez Mediano, Rachid El Hour, eds., *Cartas marruecas: documentos de Marruecos en archivos españoles* (*siglos XVI-XVII*) (Madrid, 2002), 47-148.

collection back to Zidan for money. At some point, however, Zidan negotiated the restitution of the books on monetary terms. The court chronicler Gil Gonzales Dávila, writing in the 1620s or 1630s reported that, "King Zidan saw this loss as a major one and offered Philip III a large sum of 70,000 ducats for the ransom of the manuscripts."[54]

Law and politics, then, determined the isolation of the Zidan manuscripts from the rest of the Spanish collection. The manuscripts made a long journey between 1612 and the end of 1615. Not only had they crossed the Mediterranean and travelled across the Iberian Peninsula but their value had also radically changed. Considered first to be worthless spoils of war by Fajardo, the manuscripts were transformed into embodiments of erroneous and useful knowledge at the hands of the prior of the Escorial and the royal interpreter of Oriental languages. For the State Counselors—among them the Inquisitor General—law and realpolitik were more important than doctrinal questions or scholarly interest, and in their hands, the collection was turned into a political asset which, if wisely traded, could have enhanced Spain's power at the straits of Gibraltar, the "key" to the Mediterranean. When the counselors—again, including the Inquisitor General—expressed themselves in a way that went beyond political interests and legal constraints, they chose to echo the language of scholars of Arabic, and not that of the Inquisition, suggesting that some books ought to be copied and translated because of their usefulness.

Why was the legality of the capture, however, so important? What was at stake? And how was the library transformed from worthless spoils into a precious political hostage? The consultation of the Council of State clearly demonstrates that despite the fact that Spain and Morocco had not signed peace accords before the eighteenth century, both polities at least occasionally employed the law, Christian and Muslim, to negotiate disagreements and conflicts between them. In the very same years (1613 and 1614), Spain acted as an arbiter in a dispute between Zidan and Muley Abdalla, a second contender to the Sultanate, over the inheritance of Muley al-Shayj, Zidan's brother and Abdalla's father. Both parties claimed that the inheritance, held by the Spaniards at Tangiers, was theirs. To support his claims, Zidan attached to a letter he sent to the Duke of Medina Sidonia in November 11, 1614, a juridical opinion written and signed by the Ulema of Marrakesh.[55] The absence of a

54 Gonzales Dávila, *Historia de la vida y hechos del ínclito Monarca, amado y santo, D. Felipe Tercero*, Vol. III (Madrid, 1771), 161.

55 Further research is required to understand how these negotiations influenced one another. For an analysis of the episode, see García Figueras and Joulia Saint-Cyr, *Larache*, 125-134. For the letter and the legal opinion as well as their seventeenth-century transla-

peace agreement—or a shared legal system—did not prevent Spain from taking an active side in legal debates between Moroccan parties. Zidan, however, was not a party to the legal debate, which ensued around the capture of the library. The debate concerned the legality of the capture of a French ship. Since Spain and France had a peace agreement at the time, the capture could not have been declared lawful prize.[56] Moreover, Castelane was not just another French subject as he had been sent to Morocco by Louis XIII to ransom French captives.[57] Indeed the French ambassador, Vaucelas, did all he could to liberate the Frenchman and his crew from the moment the news of their arrest reached him in 1612. More than once, he addressed figures such as the Cardinal of Toledo, as well as the Duke of Lerma, the king's favorite, pleading with them to mitigate the punishment due to Castelane. His first success was in obtaining a royal writ which ordered that the case be heard at the Council of War, despite the ruling of the local military court in Cadiz in which Castelane had initially been sentenced. In a letter from November 10, 1612, to the Viscount of Puisieux, the French minister of Foreign Affairs, Vaucelas explained that he had helped Castelane despite his objection to the act of theft—which he shared with the Minister—and only because Castelane was sent to Morocco on the orders of Louis XIII.[58] The ambassador, however, could not do a lot more. Other issues beyond the question of Castelane's status as a political subject were at play. First, part of the cargo found in his ship belonged to the Sultan of Morocco, a sovereign with whom Spain had belligerent relations at the time. Second, the documents that Castelane carried did not account for all his cargo, thus raising the suspicion that he was a pirate. Indeed, on these grounds the judges ruled that the capture was a lawful prize and sentenced two of the crew to death and the rest to serve as galley slaves in the royal fleet.[59] Whatever the case, relations with France depended in part on these legal questions.

Zidan, as we have already seen, did all he could to retrieve his manuscript collection. On the one hand, he stopped supporting the redemption of

tion to Spanish, see García-Arenal, Rodríguez Mediano, El Hour, *Cartas marruecas*, 367-369.

56 On the political and diplomatic relations between Spain and France during the decade that preceded the events examined here, see A. Airas Roel, "Política francesa de Felipe III: Las tensiones con Enrique IV," *Hispania* 31 (1971): 245-336.

57 On the history of the position of the consul in the early modern Magrib and on its transformation, see Niels, Steensgaard, "Consuls and Nations in the Levant from 1570 to 1650," *Scandinavian Economic History Review* 15 (1967): 13-55.

58 Letter of Vaucelas to Puisieux, Madrid, 10.11.1612, *Les sources inédites de l'histoire du Maroc, Première série—Dynastie Saadiene, Archive et Bibliothèques de France*, Vol. II, 550-551.

59 Henry de Castries, "Autour d'une bibliothèque marocaine," *Journal des Débats*, (20.10.1907): 3.

captives by the Trinitarians in Morocco, and used the friars to send a clear message to the Spanish king, via his Council of Portugal, regarding his desire to retrieve the library. We have seen that the state counselors supported such a barter deal but conditioned it upon Zidan's direct appeal to Spain. On the other hand, Zidan used his political allies, the Dutch Republic, to put pressure on the French to help him retrieve the manuscripts. As far as Zidan was concerned, Castelane was a French representative of Louis XIII and hence the French monarch was obliged to help Zidan in the matter. Already in June 1612, Zidan sent his ambassador, Ahmed El-Guezouli (as the Dutch records spell his name), to The Hague. There, with the help of another Moroccan agent, Samuel Pallache, the Moroccan Ambassador asked the States-General to help him acquire a passport to France.[60] The French refused to allow El-Guezouli to cross the border into France and after a year the ambassador returned to Morocco leaving Pallache in charge.[61] Seeing that the French were not hurrying to help him, Zidan changed tactic and began mistreating the French captives he held in Morocco, turning them into hostages.[62] This measure achieved only partial results and did not lead to the return of the library. Trapped between the need to care for his subjects held captive in Morocco and his obligation to Castelane who had been sent as a royal envoy, Louis XIII took sides, renouncing his obligations to Castelane claiming that the latter had never served him and was nothing more than an independent merchant.[63] At the same time, and despite not allowing the Moroccan ambassador into France, the French ambassador in Madrid was ordered to contact the Cardinal of Toledo and the Duke of Lerma and see if it was possible to convince the

60 Resolution of the States-General, The Hague, 10.8.1612, *Les sources inédites de l'histoire du Maroc, Première série—Dynastie Saadiene, Archive et Bibliothèques de Pays-Bas*, Vol. II, 131-134. On Samuel Pallache, see the revised Spanish edition of Mercedes García-Arenal and Gerard Albert Wiegers, *Un Hombre en tres mundos: Samuel Pallache, un judío marroquí en la Europa protestante y en la católica* (Madrid, 2006).

61 On December 31, Zidan wrote to the Dutch Authorities informing them, among other things, that in light of the French refusal to allow El-Guezouli to enter France he ordered the ambassador to return to Morocco and Pallache to continue represent the Sultan on the matter, 31.12.1613, *Les sources inédites de l'histoire du Maroc, Première série—Dynastie Saadiene, Archive et Bibliothèques de Pays-Bas*, 172-174.

62 The Cardinal of Toledo informed the Duke of Lerma about these measures of which he learned from two reports Vaucelas submitted, see Cardinal of Toledo to the Duke of Lerma, 28.6.1615 *Les sources inédites de l'histoire du Maroc, Première série—Dynastie Saadiene, Archive et Bibliothèques de Pays-Bas*, Vol. II, 586.

63 Letter of Louis XIII to the States-General, Paris, 5.6.1615, *Les sources inédites de l'histoire du Maroc, Première série—Dynastie Saadiene, Archive et Bibliothèques de Pays-Bas*, 568-569.

Spaniards to return the manuscripts to Zidan.[64] These intense diplomatic negotiations formed a response to the measures taken by Zidan. His desire to retrieve the manuscripts and the pressure he exerted on Spain and on France endowed the books with value they did not have when examined by Fajardo, while suspending their incorporation into the royal collection at the Escorial.

Conclusion

In 1623, in a letter sent to Cristóbal de Aybar, Bernardo de Aldrete, a humanist and scholar of Oriental languages, expressed his frustration about how difficult it was to obtain Arabic manuscripts in Spain: "The case of Arabic books, expensive because they are hand written, is dreadful.... And they will throw all of them away, unless they keep them in order *to bury* [my emphasis] them with the [manuscripts] of Muley Zidan in the Escorial."[65] In so describing the fate of Arabic manuscripts in the royal library, Aldrete was employing a hackneyed trope of the period about libraries as graveyards, namely, as spaces created to hinder readers from accessing manuscripts. The Escorial loomed large in such complaints, which assigned the role of the evil undertaker to the Spanish king.[66] The comparison between libraries and graveyards, foreign to modern ears, becomes less surprising in light of the Spanish early modern habit of referring to books as bodies by juxtaposing "libro" to "cuerpo"—"cuerpos de libros."[67] While using a trope, then, Aldrete was being extremely precise in distinguishing between three classes of bodies of books buried according to different logics: first, books of Moriscos seized and destroyed by the Inquisition; second, manuscripts that the Inquisition handed over to the Escorial or manuscripts the library obtained through purchases or bequeathing; third, Zidan's manuscripts. By now, this tripartite burial logic is clearer, and we know that in the years following their capture, the fate of the Moroccan manuscripts was not in the hands of inquisitors or of librarians. The collection remained

64 *Les sources inédites de l'histoire du Maroc, Première série—Dynastie Saadiene, Archive et Bibliothèques de France*, Vol. II, 586.

65 Bernardo José Aldrete, *Un epistolario de Bernardo José Aldrete, (1612-1623)*, ed. Joaquín Rodríguez Mateos (Sevilla, 2009), 218.

66 Fernando Bouza, "La biblioteca de El Escorial y el orden de los saberes en el siglo XVI," in *El Escorial: Arte, poder y cultura en la corte de Felipe II*, (Madrid, 1989), 81-99, esp. 81.

67 Gurmendi, for example, described Zidan's manuscripts as "cuerpos de libros" (footnote 21). For more on the relations between books and bodies, see Georgina Dopico Black, "Canons Afire: Libraries, Books and Bodies in *Don Quixote*'s Spain," in *Cervantes Don Quixote: A Casebook*, ed. Roberto Gonzáles Echevarría, (Oxford, 2005), 95-124.

inaccessible and locked behind closed doors for political reasons backed by a legal matrix.

For a long time, the study of erudite culture and oriental scholarship in early modern Spain was divorced from the political and social history of the western Mediterranean.[68] Early modern constraints on the study of Oriental languages were understood within an oppositional framework between, on the one hand, a small but enthusiastic group of scholars of Oriental languages, and on the other, royal magistrates who, following the inquisitorial logic of the Index, hunted for such manuscripts, destroying or isolating them. While this perspective has shed much light on the study of Arabic in seventeenth-century Spain, it treats Arabic, spoken and written, exclusively as an epistemological problem thus depoliticizing its history. The journey of Zidan's books and the negotiations about their use and value, however, demonstrate how important it is to link the history of the Mediterranean sea, piracy, and captivity to that of the circulation of manuscripts and early modern scholarship. Only by doing so, can we explain and understand the history of one of the largest collections of Arabic manuscripts and the reasons for which it was kept away from readers at the time that Oriental scholarship was formed as a discipline of knowledge.

Zidan's collection, then, demonstrates the shifting meanings Arabic manuscripts had in seventeenth-century Spain, the opposed ends they served, and the conflicting forces of which they were objects—scholarly, religious, legal and political. These forces were not exclusive and the same actors—Benito Arias Montano or the Inquisitor General, to name but two—often drove more than one agenda without disclosing any sense of contradiction or tension in their actions and decision. The crown could decide that Arabic had a religious identity—Muslim—and thus its use, and later its users, ought to disappear from Spain and simultaneously order the collection of such manuscripts and the appropriation or return of a large Moroccan manuscript collection.[69] Rather than reflect inconsistent politics, these actions formed part of a long and non-linear sovereignty making process vis-à-vis things Muslim.

68 See, however, *The Orient in Spain* and *Cartas marruecas*, two studies that among other things show how early modern translators and interpreters of Arabic in Spain not only crossed linguistic boundaries but also blurred the lines between *vita activa* and *contemplativa*—or between the field tent and library desk—by partaking in diplomatic negotiations while engaging in scholarly projects: Fernando Rodríguez Mediano and Mercedes García-Arenal, *The Orient in Spain* and García-Arenal, Rodríguez Mediano, and El Hour, *Cartas marruecas*.

69 García-Arenal, "The Religious Identity of the Arabic Language and the Affair of the Lead Books of the Sacromonte of Granada."